

Coventry City Council
Minutes of the Meeting of Business, Economy and Enterprise Scrutiny Board (3)
held at 2.00 pm on Wednesday, 19 March 2014

Present:

Members: Councillor T Skipper (Chair)
 Councillor F Abbott
 Councillor M Auluck
 Councillor J Clifford (substitute for Councillor Galliers)
 Councillor M Hammon
 Councillor K Maton
 Councillor S Walsh
 Councillor D Welsh

Other Members Councillor L Kelly
(By Invitation):

Employees (by Directorate):

Place D Fitzhugh, L House, A Maqsood, D Nuttall, K Fawcett
 D Taylor

Resources K Larsen, G Paddan,

Apologies: Councillor D Galliers
 Councillor K Taylor

Public Business

47. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of disclosable pecuniary interests however; the Board noted that Councillors Auluck and Maton serve as members on the Whitefriars Housing Group.

48. Minutes

(a) The minutes of the meeting held on 12 February 2014 were agreed and signed as a true record.

(b) There were no matters arising.

49. Coventry Homefinder Choice Based Lettings Policy

The Scrutiny Board received a presentation and considered the briefing note in respect of the draft Coventry Homefinder Choice Based Lettings Policy following the

re-write, which was requested by the Cabinet Member (Housing and Heritage) at his meeting on 11th April 2013, before it is presented to Cabinet on 15th April 2014.

The Board noted that the Council no longer owned any housing following the Large Scale Voluntary Transfer of all the former Council Housing to Whitefriars Housing Group in September 2000. The presentation provided a summary of the issues that were being reviewed and the changes to the Policy. Consideration was given to the following:

- Changes to categories of housing needs in bands and reasonable preference categories in the legislation.
- Local connection as qualifying criteria: the Council has discretion whether to apply this new guidance in its allocations policy.
- Applicants that refuse more than five offers without good reason may have their application closed; currently refusal offers stand at 10.
- Whitefriars Housing Group was comfortable with the proposed changes to the Policy.
- Discussion on the number of people waiting to move due to under occupancy (referred to as the "bedroom tax") Releasing of large properties was discussed.
- The condition of the property when up for re-let, together with the location of the property; whether in a desirable area. Property management checks were carried out to ensure good tenable standards of the property.
- Those currently in private rental and waiting for re-housing to Council/housing rental – it was noted that the homefinder facility was open to all.
- Issues relating to large families wanting a six bedroom property and temporary housing of families in bed and breakfast accommodation.

RESOLVED that the Scrutiny Board: -

- a) Notes the content of the briefing note.**
- b) Recommends to the Cabinet Member (Business, Enterprise and Employment) approval of the Coventry Homefinder Choice Based Lettings Policy, with a review of the impacts of the Policy being carried out following the first full year of implementation and the outcomes of the review presented to the Business, Economy and Enterprise Scrutiny Board (3) for consideration.**
- c) Submits a briefing note to Cabinet with the recommendations from the Board.**

50. Tourism Strategy for Coventry

The Scrutiny Board received a presentation and considered a briefing note on the proposals for the Tourism Strategy for Coventry. The Board further reviewed proposals for tourism products that were in development; with the support of the new consolidated Council services for sports, art, heritage, business relationships, tourism and events.

Work has been undertaken on the Tourism Strategy for Coventry and this was summarised in the draft document circulated – ‘Coventry 2014-2024 an emerging Vision for Tourism’. It was noted that the Service had hosted an international Confex 2014 delegation and partnership event in London.

Members of the Board questioned the officers on the Tourism Strategy for Coventry and recommendations, matters raised included:

- Events – Godiva festival being the largest festival for Coventry.
- Sports events that have been held in Coventry and national events that would be coming to the City.
- Graduates – approximately 58,000 students in Coventry.
- Outcomes by 2024 to include: City to establish itself in the top 20 UK Towns and Cities, increase overnight business trips in Coventry, increase information - ‘Visit Coventry and Warwickshire’ website.
- Coventry is not recognised in the Top 20 Towns for all trips at present.
- Coventry does not have a recognised official Destination Management Organisation (DMO) in its own right; therefore invitation to attend official national tourism steering groups (Visit England) was not possible. DMO would take three years to establish.
- Resources used for heritage purposes – outside funding be investigated.
- The Tourism App would be launched tomorrow (20th March 2014).
- City branding – with emphasis on ‘City of Peace and Reconciliation’.

The Scrutiny Board requested that the Tourism Strategy: a) reflects in its priorities, the multi-cultural strengths of the city as well as its importance as a City of peace and reconciliation; b) changed the nuance of the language used from decreasing negative perceptions to increasing positive perceptions of the City.

RESOLVED that the Scrutiny Board: -

- a) Notes the content of the briefing note.**
- b) Makes the following recommendations to the Cabinet Member (Business, Enterprise and Employment) to progress with partners;**
 - i. Encourage the establishment of a Destination Management Organisation for Coventry.**
 - ii. Investigate sources of funding for a dedicated operational budget.**

51. Events Budget

The Scrutiny Board received a presentation and considered the briefing note of the Service Manager and Senior Event Officer, which provided a breakdown of the City Council’s events budget for 2013/14 and details of the projects and programmes funded, including the measured outputs and outcomes for each area of expenditure.

Further consideration was given to budgets that support events and it was noted that the Godiva Festival was the chief free family festival and had been running for 16 years. Officers provided a breakdown of the figures and it was suggested that further sponsorship be sourced.

Members of the Board questioned the officers on the review and recommendations, matters raised included:

- Coventry Half Marathon – funding is from a separate budget.
- Coventry Peace Festival – runs from 1-14 November; documented as being well supported.
- Future of current events was discussed – would a shuttle bus be useful for the Godiva Festival?
- Rebranding of the Godiva Festival to include Coventry and its logo – this would provide better exposure on social media sites.
- Clarification was sought of the ‘General Events’ budget – this budget included events such as St. George’s Day, Armistice Day and Lifestyle (food and fashion).
- Christmas events – source additional funding/supporting budgets.
- Usefulness of the figures presented – what can be delivered with the funds available.

The Scrutiny Board requested that they receive feedback from the Cabinet Advisory Panel, Sports Vision Strategy, Tourism and City Wide Events meeting specifically with regards to the future of the Godiva Festival.

RESOLVED, that the Scrutiny Board notes the content of the briefing note and recommends to the Cabinet Member (Business, Enterprise and Employment) that ways for all the budgets for events to be consolidated into one total events budget, be explored.

52. Outstanding Issues

The outstanding issues were included in the Work Programme.

53. Work Programme 2013/14

The Board noted the Work programme items for the next meeting 16th April 2014.

54. Meeting Evaluation

The Board commented that the meeting had been very informative.

A comment was made by the remaining Board Members that Members should remain until the end of the meeting; unless leave was agreed with the Chair. In addition, The Board suggested that, to aid continuity, Members should serve on Scrutiny Boards for two years.

55. Any Other Public Business

The Chair announced that John Latham had been appointed as Coventry University’s Vice Chancellor. It was agreed that a letter be sent from the Board congratulating him on his appointment.

(Meeting closed at: 4.20pm)